

To: Transportation Committee  
From: Patricia Conroy  
27 Sheehan Road  
Warren, CT 06777  
Re: H.B. 6343  
Date: February 10, 2015

Representative Guerrero, Senator Maynard, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of H.B. 6343: An act concerning the restoration of the Housatonic Railroad line. I would like to register my enthusiastic support for updating and restoring passenger rail service through northwest Connecticut, as described in Representative Roberta Willis' proposed legislation H.B. 6343. This legislation is critical to the future of northwest Connecticut because it will foster economic development, lessen our dependence on fossil fuels, and improve the quality of life of residents of our region.

Passenger rail service through northwest Connecticut linking our region south to New York City and north to Pittsfield, Massachusetts would not only result in increased tourism in our towns, but also would provide commuting and new business development opportunities for residents. It would stimulate job growth in our town centers and facilitate the transportation of freight for businesses that provide jobs for residents. As our state embarks on a long overdue revitalization of our transit systems and infrastructure, northwest Connecticut must be given the opportunity to maximize its potential by reinstating and improving its passenger railway assets.

The restoration of passenger rail would also support our national and state goals of lessening dependence on fossil fuels and promoting clean energy. An updated rail system would improve safety and decrease noise.

Lastly, a modern rail system through northwest Connecticut would improve the quality of life of its residents. The attendant job growth would attract young families to revitalize the region and would lessen automotive dependency for all, including for the region's aging population who drive less but still wish to maintain their independence for as long as possible. A linked railway system could be the catalyst for a public transit system linking the region to other towns, possibly leading to more comprehensive bus and shuttle services. It would provide affordable, safe, and reliable access not only to jobs but also to other educational, health and community services.

Rail is critical for our future. It has the potential to revitalize communities and provide a vital public service. Our region of the state, although it is graced with abundant scenic and natural resources, needs a significant, environmentally-responsible economic stimulus which passenger rail is uniquely suited to fulfill. Railroads brought economic development to our region in the past. The time has come for its restoration, so that we can preserve vital communities in northwest Connecticut into the future.